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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JANUARY 29, 2009

SUMMARY: Report and photographs of the visit of Army chief General Kayani to the restive Swat valley dominated front pages in most major dailies on Thursday. Newspapers quoted General Kayani as reiterating that "government's writ in Swat would be established at all costs." Newspapers also highlighted Prime Minister Gilani's interview with CNN in Davos urging President Obama "to respect Pakistan's sovereignty." A statement by Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesman that "Pakistan had no understanding with the U.S. on drone attacks" was also prominently displayed. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen remarks that "Afghanistan and Pakistan were the biggest threat confronting the United States" were front-paged by many newspapers. Newspaper ran reports that "seven militants and equal number of civilians were killed in clashes in Swat." Several dailies ran reports on President Zardari's published article in "Washington Post" calling upon President Obama "to help resolve Kashmir dispute."

'Terrorism' remained the central theme of editorials in most dailies. The English daily, "Dawn," noted that "while there is need for changing military tactics in response to the different compulsions on the ground when an operation is undertaken, the broader need for a unified political approach vis-à-vis the militants is absolutely essential." The Urdu daily, "Express," noted that "whatever may be the cause of the continuation of drone attacks, it is high time that some eagerness is shown to get these stopped and the American administration be apprised of its results."

News Stories

"Govt Writ In Swat At All Costs: Kayani "The News" (01/29)

"Sixteen more people, including seven militants, were killed and 23 others injured in Swat violence on Wednesday, as Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani vowed to establish the writ of the government."

"Gilani Urges Obama To Respect Pakistan's Sovereignty" "Dawn" (01/29)

"Calling on President Barack Obama to respect Pakistan's sovereignty, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani urged the US administration on Wednesday to stop drone attacks in Fata. He said drone attacks were fuelling militancy in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. "If there are any drone attacks these would be counter-productive...", he told CNN's Christiane Amanpour in an

interview at the World Economic Forum (WEF)."

"Govt At Loss On Drone Attacks" "The News" (01/29)

"Confusion prevails in Islamabad and Washington as conflicting statements are being made about the reality behind the US drone attacks inside Pakistan's territory, which result in civilian deaths. On Wednesday, a Foreign Office spokesman clearly said: "There is no understanding between Pakistan and the United States on Predator attacks." But, earlier, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates had made no bones about the fact that the government of Pakistan was simply 'informed' about these drone attacks, though he also did not claim any 'understanding.'"

"Unilateral U.S. Decision Not Binding On Pakistan: Rabbani:" "Dawn" (01/29)

The Senate was informed on Wednesday that the government had not been informed by the United States about its decision to continue drone attacks in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas."

"U.S. Resolve On Test In Pakistan, Says Mullen" "Dawn" (01/29)

"Some level of stability, no safe havens, reasonable development... nuclear weapons not a significant concern in Pakistan," said America's top military official when asked what would constitute success for him in the South Asian region.... The admiral underlined the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan as the biggest threat confronting the United States and said that within those two countries, the presence of terrorist elements in Fata was the main cause of concern for Washington."
"Zardari Seeks Obama's Help To Resolve Kashmire Dispute" "The News" (01/29)

"Advocating the need for recasting Pakistan-US relationship into a long-term partnership for peace, stability and development, President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday asked President Barack Obama to help resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute that remains at the heart of South Asian unrest and challenges like extremism."

"Hamilton Urges U.S. Efforts For Kashmir Resolution" "Daily Times" (01/29)

"Lee Hamilton, a veteran Democrat leader and vice chairman of the 9/11 Commission, has called for United States' support for the resolution of the longstanding Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and favored assisting Pakistan's effort against Al Qaeda along the Afghan border."

"USAID projects in FATA shelved over security" "Daily Times" (01/29)

"Around 25 projects operated by USAID in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and settled areas of the NWFP have been temporarily closed over security concerns, a private TV channel quoted its sources on Wednesday."

"Clinton Concerned Over Civilian Deaths In U.S. Attacks" "Daily Times" (01/29)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Tuesday expressed concern over civilian casualties in American attacks against militant targets in the Pak-Afghan border region."

"Zardari Vows To Curb Militancy, Parallel Courts" "Dawn" (01/29)

"President Asif Ali Zardari has reiterated the government's commitment that militants will never be allowed to set up a parallel judiciary."

"School Blown Up In Bajaur" "Dawn" (01/29)

"Taking a leaf out of their counterpart's war on education in Swat, suspected militants blew up a government school for boys near a security post in the Nawagai subdivision of Bajaur Agency on Tuesday night."

"Seven Militants Killed In Swat" "Dawn" (01/29)

"Seven militants and seven civilians were killed in clashes between the local Taliban and security forces in Swat on Wednesday. The clash took place when Army Chief General Parvez Ashfaq Kayani was visiting the valley."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Friends, Not Foes," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (01/29)

"The fact that Obama chose an Arab news channel to give his first interview as president is in itself significant. Clearly he sees building a warmer relationship with the Muslim world as a key priority. So far, the new US president has shown he intends to keep up the momentum he built during his election campaign. In this, he has proved inaccurate those who had predicted he would focus essentially on domestic policy during his early days in office. The Obama team seems to be aware of the importance of creating greater harmony as a means of battling terror... Should the US president succeed in turning the vision he brings to Washington into policy measures that can help end the acrimony we see everywhere, he would have staged a true revolution."

"Obama's Early Initiatives" an Op-ed by Tariq Fatemi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (01/29)

"Obama is also likely to demonstrate greater support for democracy in Pakistan as evident from his earlier message of congratulations to President Zardari, in which he praised the latter for pledging to 'return to parliament the power unconstitutionally appropriated to the presidency' and characterized the judges' return as 'an important step towards the restoration of a truly independent judiciary.' But he will be a far more demanding 'friend' than Bush."

"Obama Should Fulfill The Promise Of Change" an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (01/29)

"The truth is that the real battle now is between Barack Hussein Obama and this Jewish-Christian lobby. The U.S. President understands his nation's desire for change, hence if he acts courageously and does not succumb to the Jewish-Christian extremists in his efforts to improve America's credibility, he will not only ensure peace in the world but also restore America's image. .. Therefore, Mr. Obama should step forward and play a role which makes weak and helpless nations think of the U.S. as a well-wisher and sympathizer."

"Obama's Nice Words," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (01/29)

"President Obama's interview with Al-Arabiya satellite television station on Monday night contains some nice and conciliatory words for the Muslim World, which today stands thoroughly alienated from the US as a result of the mindless policies of his predecessor. In an attempt to regain its confidence, Mr Obama even invoked the fact that some members of his family were Muslim. Although the gesture was welcome and most timely, in the final analysis it will be the deeds that would determine whether Muslims regard the US as their enemy or not."

"As The Terror Escalates," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (01/29)

"... While there is need for changing military tactics in response to the different compulsions on the ground when an operation is undertaken, the broader need for a unified political approach vis-à-vis the militants is absolutely essential. But that is not the case. Those battling India - in Kashmir or on Indian territory - are treated differently from those fighting the Americans in Afghanistan. There is yet another approach towards the militants whose activities are focused on the domestic front as in Swat. What is needed is a coordinated and integrated approach."

"U.S. Policy On Drone Attacks" an editorial in liberal Urdu daily

"Express" (cir. 25,000) (01/29)

"Whatever may be the cause of the continuation of drone attacks, it is high time that some eagerness is shown to get these stopped and the American administration be apprised of its results. The government also needs to intensify the operation in the tribal areas so that terrorists are eliminated and America does not need to cross into our territory in their pursuit."

"South Asia: The Most Volatile Region," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (01/29)

"Pakistan is a fast-failing state manifesting patterns of activity less characteristic of South Asia and more patterned on Afghanistan and Somalia, leveraged by a disputed concept of sharia. It radiates threats to South Asia as well as to Central Asia and Iran. More dangerously, unlike the rest of South Asia, it has "ungoverned spaces" on its sovereign territory where non-state actors and foreigners are setting up their own mini-states complete with taxing authority and "quick justice" courts dictated by warlords. Foreign and local terrorists trained in Pakistan have struck in the United States and Europe and India, and can do it again unless eliminated. It is unrealistic to make reference to the "root causes" only when the revisionist state is spinning out of internal control and its elites are unwilling or unable to rise to the occasion themselves."

"Need Of The Hour Is Work, And Not Fiery Statements," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (01/29)

"The security situation of Swat isn't all right, and the warning signals coming from Washington are also disturbing for every Pakistani as well. The expectations from the new U.S. administration that it would discontinue drone missile attacks aren't fulfilled. This is high time for the whole nation to adopt a new approach together to overcome this predicament."

"U.S. Declaration To Continue Attacks On Pakistan," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (01/29)

"The Government of Pakistan is very disappointed over the new U.S. administration's announcement to continue drone attacks. Time has come for all the heads of the political parties and the Army Chief to sit together to cope with this situation without delay."

"Decisive Moment For Pakistani Leadership," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (01/29)

"In spite of Pakistan's continuous protest and resistance, the U.S. has plainly made it clear that it would continue drone attacks on Pakistani border areas, and would chase Al-Qaeda across the world. Pakistan must understand that the pride of the U.S. military might is smashed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and consequently the process of its economic meltdown in the world is accelerated too. Our rulers must not be afraid of the United States, and take honourable stand on national security."

"U.S. Announcement To Continue Drone Attacks" an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (01/29)

"The impression among people is gaining strength that like the Musharraf regime present government has also given permission for the missile strikes.... The missile strikes will continue until a Drone or two are downed.... To what extent the Pakistan Army will tolerate this situation?"

"U.S. Missile Strikes On Pakistani Areas" an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (01/29)

"In his first interview after assuming the office to an Arab TV, President Barack Obama admitted the war on terror in the last seven years proved counterproductive. If President Obama is now aware of the harms of the war on terrorism then his attention should also be drawn to the difficulties Pakistan faces in the fight against

terrorism due to the U.S. drone attacks inside our territory."

"Continuation Of Drone Attacks?" an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (cir. 5,000) (01/29)

"It would not be unjustified to expect President Zardari to act courageously and try to get the drone attacks stopped with the help of European countries."

"Pakistan Should Inform New U.S. Administration About Its Limits" an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 5,000) (01/29)

"Now that the Obama administration has decided to focus on Afghanistan, we should also be realistic instead of harboring unrealistic hopes. America has informed us of its policy; we must also tell the new U.S. administration of what we can and cannot do."

"Assistance For NWFP Affectees" an editorial note in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (01/29)

"U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson has assured the Frontier province government that the U.S. administration will provide comprehensive food and essential commodities assistance to those people who had to migrate from Bajaur, Swat and other areas.... Hundreds of thousand of war on terror affectees are living in temporary shelters in the Frontier province and are greatly in need of assistance. The American government should provide the kind of help that could rehabilitate these people in their areas."

"Some Observations On The War In Swat" Op-ed by Aasim Sajjad Akhtar in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (01/29)

"There is a need to transcend the superficial analyses that are floating around in the popular media where conspiracy theorists typically identify the age-old 'enemies of Pakistan' as creating chaos in the shape of the 'Taliban..... I believe that there is a need to recognize the tremendous ideational power that Islam plays in the wider society..... I also think that the romance of the 'Taliban' amongst ordinary people in Swat has worn off to a significant extent..... By continuing to rain bombs down upon innocent people, the Pakistani military is providing every incentive to the local population to look at the 'Taliban' as an alternative to the violence of the state... What Swat really needs is a genuinely anti-imperialist force to resist the so-called 'war on terror' and build a progressive and equal society not society not through brazen coercion but through popular mobilization."

"Taliban Country" an Op-ed by Mahmud Sipra in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (01/29)

"Every forest today is infested with the Taliban who are equipped with the most modern weaponry and a brutal extremist agenda to terrorize its people. Everyday brings in more of these marauders from the hills and the mountain passes. This valley is under siege."
Patterson